

System Configuration Team (SCT)

**Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26
Meeting Notes
June 19, 2003**

DRAFT

Greetings and Introductions.

The June 19 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the National Marine Fisheries Service offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS. The agenda and a list of attendees for the meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B. Hevlin led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda; he distributed the notes from the May SCT meeting, and asked that any comments be furnished to him prior to the SCT's July meeting..

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

2. Progress Update on Design of the Chief Joseph Flow Deflectors.

Lester from the Corps' Seattle District updated the SCT on the status of the Chief Joseph flow deflector design; he said the Corps had received \$400,000 for this project in FY'03, and has begun the modeling work at WES. Once that work is completed, the remaining funds will be used for in-house project management, initiating structural design and environmental coordination. A further \$900,000 has been requested for this project in FY'04; in FY'05, we will need about \$10 million to initiate the actual flow deflector construction, which will then be completed, and the deflectors operational, in FY'06, he said. Lester added that if Congress chooses to make Construction General funds available for this project, the Corps has the capability of spending up to \$8 million in FY'04.

3. FFDRWG Updates.

Norm Tolonen reported that a meeting was held on June 3 to discuss the spring survival data from the test of the simulated spillwall spill pattern at The Dalles. Survival at 18 Kcfs spill through Bays 2 and 4 averaged between 94.7% and 101.8%. The consensus at that meeting was that spillwall construction should proceed, said Tolonen.

At another meeting between Portland District FFDRWG members and the Dam Safety Committee, the Corps laid out its concerns about the acceleration of erosion in the floor of Spill Bay 1 and the basalt shelf downstream due to high-velocity spill at low tailwater elevations; at that meeting, the consensus was, again, that spillwall construction should proceed, that the erosion situation in Spill Bay 1 and the basalt shelf should be closely

monitored, and that the Corps needs to develop the relationship between flow per bay vs. tailwater elevation. The participants at that meeting further agreed that Bay 1 erosion repairs will be completed as part of the spillwall implementation project. Based on the agreement at these two meetings, said Tolonen, the District does intend to move forward with the spillwall construction project at The Dalles, and would like to advertise the contract for that work next week.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to this topic. Ultimately, Ron Boyce said Oregon has no problem with the proposed spillwall construction and schedule, despite the fact that the fishway will need to be shut down from late November through late January. The in-water work window will also include the repair of the four-foot hole in the floor of The Dalles Spillway 1. I just want to be sure there are no adult passage issues that have surfaced, said Boyce. I would suggest you take that up with FPOM, Peters replied. And the additional dollars for the repair work are still a question mark? Boyce asked. We still need a good estimate of what that's going to cost, Norm Tolonen replied; it may be included in the cost of the spillwall construction contract, which should be around \$10 million. We'll talk about it some more and report back to you, Peters said.

So any SCT problems with the spillwall construction project? Hevlin asked. No objections were voiced to this project, and it was therefore approved. We'll take up the erosion repair at the SCT's July meeting, Hevlin said.

Marvin Shutters said the next Walla Walla District FFDRWG meeting will take place on July 30-31 at Walla Walla District headquarters.

4. SRWG Update.

How is the John Day summer spill study going? Hevlin asked. It was delayed for a couple of days so that we could get the fish up to size, Peters replied; they're going to re-evaluate the timing of the test and make the decision in the next couple of days. This is a radio-tag test using subyearlings? Hevlin asked. Yes, Peters replied.

We're also working to complete our prioritization list from last week's meeting in Walla Walla, Peters said; once that is available later today, we're requesting that the lists be reviewed within one week to make any changes in priority. We need to match dollars to the research, and make a decision as to what studies to recommend for funding by early July, he said. There is a multiple bypass meeting on June 30 at Portland District, Peters added. There is also a July 9 meeting scheduled to discuss The Dalles decision process in Portland; that meeting is open to anyone who is interested in participating and begins at 9 a.m. McNary turbine will be discussed at a meeting on July 17, probably here at NMFS' Portland offices.

5. Dworshak Hatchery Improvements Update.

Brian Miller reported that the Dworshak Hatchery boiler upgrade is now completed and up and running -- that's the first contract, he said. There is still some minor modifications to be made to the boiler's biofiltration system later this summer. You'll be ready to use the re-use system by November? Tom Lorz asked. Correct, Miller replied. In response to a question, Miller said the cost of this contract was about \$600,000 less than budgeted. Hevlin asked Ken Barnhart to investigate whether Bonneville can earmark those savings so that they can be used for another project within CRFM; Barnhardt said he will do so.

6. Ice Harbor Summer Spill Study.

There was a conference call yesterday afternoon to discuss the Ice Harbor summer spill study, said Hevlin; he asked Marvin Shutters to summarize the outcome of that call. There was no consensus reached on the study design during yesterday's call, Shutters said; we went through the background for the recommendation the Corps was making. Mark Smith of the Corps said the main purpose of yesterday's call was to lay out the test the Corps is proposing to do -- a comparison between two days of BiOp bulk spill (concentrated into three spill bays), and a second treatment of two days of no spill. He noted that survival has been fairly poor at Ice Harbor during the last several summer spill programs; we wanted to look at concentrated spill as an alternative to what has been done in the past, he said.

Smith said that, earlier this week, the Corps conducted a spill test of 15 Kcfs through each of three bays for about two hours; gas levels downstream came right up to the 120% cap during the test, with incoming gas of about 113%. We'll work with Reservoir Control Center to be sure we stay within the gas cap during the test, Smith said. Jim Ruff observed that the spill program at the Snake River projects ends tomorrow, so water quality concerns should no longer be a problem.

The other option under serious consideration is concentrated BiOp spill vs. BiOp spill spread evenly across the spill bays, Hevlin said; those are really the only two alternatives that are still under serious consideration. We are planning to continue to look at spillway conditions at Ice Harbor using balloon tags during the spring and summer of 2004, Shutters added.

The group discussed the details of the test, including where and how the test fish will be released; Shutters said the Corps hopes to gain route-specific survival estimates for both treatments (bulk spill and turbine passage), for comparison with other routes of passage and previous years' data. Boyce noted that the Corps is banking on the fact that 2000-2002 has yielded good estimates of BiOp spill survival; he said that, from Oregon's perspective, a side-by-side test would be a better measure of intra-year survival. We've talked to NMFS researchers, Shutters replied; we feel we already have solid survival information from the spill patterns and treatments used in previous years.

A lengthy discussion of the nuances of the Corps' proposed experimental design for 2003, including its effects on the distribution of predators in the tailrace, ensued. Boyce noted that he has serious concerns about doing a no-spill turbine survival study at Ice Harbor during such a high outmigration year for wild subyearling chinook; he said he was having difficulty understanding how a no-spill turbine survival study will advance the information base that will be used to design the spillway survival studies at Ice Harbor in 2004. Dana Knutson replied that the Corps is interested in finding out whether bypass and turbine passage is a viable alternative to spill passage at Ice Harbor. I find it difficult to believe that the final configuration at Ice Harbor will be no spill, said Boyce.

Hevlin asked the SCT members to state their position on this study. Shane Scott said that, while Rod Woodin would likely favor the two spill treatments, rather than the concentrated spill/zero spill turbine passage study design the Corps is proposing, he (Scott) is willing to support the study as proposed by the Corps. Hevlin said Steve Pettit's position was unclear after yesterday's FPAC meeting. Ken Barnhardt said Bonneville supports the Corps' proposal. Boyce said ODFW does not support the Corps proposal, but would prefer to see a comparison between the bulk/spread BiOp spill treatments.

Boyce suggested an alternative: a 20-day study of bulk spill only, with no turbine passage survival component. After a few minutes of additional discussion, Hevlin observed that there appears to be no SCT consensus on this study design; final authority rests with the Corps, once they've taken comments from the region. The study is scheduled to begin this Monday, said Hevlin; if anyone objects strongly enough to the proposed study, they will need to elevate it to the Implementation Team. He noted that Ruff is the IT chair; Ruff replied that that is why he was sitting in on this portion of today's meeting.

Hevlin suggested a potential compromise: basically we're talking about two different opinions on risk, here. What if we agree to support the Corps' proposed study design, then go to BiOp spill once the 21-day test period is over? Hevlin said. In response to a question, it was observed that preliminary PIT-tag data from the summer test at Ice Harbor should be available by the first week in August. Shutters said the Corps might be willing to support bulk BiOp spill through the two bays, but would not be willing to support BiOp spill using the same pattern employed in previous years.

It sounds as though NOAA Fisheries has made up its mind to support the Corps' proposed study design, said Boyce; he said he will consult Tom Lorz, Steve Pettit, David Wills and Rod Woodin about whether or not they want to elevate this issue to IT. At the very least, he said, we will put our concerns in writing. Ultimately, no SCT consensus was reached about a recommended spill operation following the Ice Harbor test. Do we need to set up an IT conference call for tomorrow? Hevlin asked. I'll consult with the other salmon managers and get back to you this afternoon, Boyce replied.

7. FY'04 CRFM Program.

John Kranda distributed the most recent version of the FY'04 CRFM measures worksheet, dated June 19; he said he has plugged in most of the numbers from the updated FY'04 workplans. The bottom line, in terms of the total cost of the FY'04 program, is nearly \$112 million, Kranda said; research numbers have pretty much increased across the board, and there are a number of new projects. The President has given Congress a \$95 million proposal for FY'04, he added; we should have some preliminary indication of what Congress is going to do with that request as soon as next week. Even if we're awarded the full \$95 million, said Kranda, the SCT is going to have its work cut out for it.

Kranda, Knutsen and Peters then spent a few minutes going through the spreadsheet line by line; Kranda noted that he has organized the FY'04 spreadsheet according to the SCT's FY'03 priorities, although obviously there is nothing sacred about those prioritizations for FY'04. The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to this information.

As you can see, said Kranda at the close of this exercise, the SCT has a big job ahead of us, in setting our priorities and scrubbing this list down so that it fits within whatever CRFM appropriation we receive. Kranda said he will get the workplans out as soon as possible; he asked the SCT to come to the next meeting of the group prepared for substantive engagement on the FY'04 CRFM priorities. We need to have that prioritized list in place no later than the September 18 SCT meeting, Hevlin observed. Knutsen added that he has an August 1 deadline to submit his work priorities to his superiors; with that in mind, it would be helpful if the SCT could have some idea of its priorities by then. There is seldom major disagreement on what the highest-priority items should be, Hevlin replied; it's the bubble projects that require the most discussion. Hevlin said he will send out the usual SCT prioritization worksheets prior to the group's July meeting. Lorz said he will work together with the other salmon managers to develop a unified FPAC priority list; Hevlin agreed to work with the other federal agencies to develop a similar list of federal priorities.

8. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Thursday, July 17. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.